

Electricity in medicine and surgery. By GEO. C. PITZER, M.D. First Edition. St. Louis, Mo., 1883.

This is a small book of eighty-three pages, thirty-two of which are devoted to the familiar illustrations and descriptions of "electrical apparatus," twenty to "electro-therapeutics," four to "central galvanization," five to "electrolysis," twelve to "the removal of hairs by electrolysis," six to "miscellaneous diseases treated by electricity," three to "the wrong current," and the remainder, one page, to "a word to beginners." There is, however, no table of contents to indicate these divisions of the subject.

The object of the work is "to supply a want expressed by country practitioners generally." The author has "aimed to make every thing as plain and simple as possible, so that a mere novice may, with the aid of the book, commence the use of electricity in the treatment of disease."

In the section concerning "electrical apparatus," we note a novelty in "Dr. Hathaway's electro-magnetic chair." The illustration represents a young woman seated in the chair with her feet upon an attached platform, while beneath her, on the same platform projecting backward, is a galvanic or other battery. "The object of this invention is to provide a simple and convenient apparatus for the transmission of electrical currents through all parts of the human body, and in different directions." "In using this apparatus it is only necessary that the hands and feet should be bared." "The patient sits comfortably in a chair, and when the switches are placed in proper position, the current is made to enter the right foot, pass up the right leg, cross into the left leg, and down out of the body by the left foot," and so on.

We are not surprised "that the management of this apparatus is easily learned," and that "one attendant can, without difficulty, attend to four chairs at the same time." The treatment of disease by galvanism thus administered is as much simplified as the putting out of fires in St. Louis would be simplified if, on the sounding of an alarm, the firemen should open a window on the house-top and play their stream blindly into space. They might scatter a few drops of water on the burning block—they might *not*. It is this street-corner method of pumping electricity into the human body in the trust that the agent will exhibit some peculiar selective affinity in seeking out the morbid process and curing it, that has long cast discredit upon the use of electricity

in medicine. It is only another instance of the blunderbuss charge of a bullet and some bird's shot into a forest with a view of bringing down a quail, a deer, or—nothing. The discharge pleases the doctor and the patient,—the disease remains.

This is not scientific electrization—in the present instance it is a mistake—it is often charlatanism. For if there is one fundamental canon of the electro-therapeutics of to-day, it is a *localized* treatment whether by galvanization or faradization of the part affected, involving of course a diagnosis.

What organ does the doctor treat in his chair? If he knows, why not treat it locally? In fact how can he treat it otherwise? But our words do not apply to our author alone. They apply to scores in our profession who think that it is only necessary to get the electricity into the body and to leave it to do its work there. Result: failure, scepticism, charlatanry.

We think that Dr. Hathaway's "electro-magnetic chair" had better have been left out of Dr. Pitzer's otherwise, in many respects, tolerably good little work.

We are glad to observe that our author places confidence in the treatment of some diseases by localized galvanization. He is a warm advocate of the "polar method," and in this we agree with him, wishing, however, that he had brought forward some other authority than "Dr. Tipton," "who "knows that the electro-vital fluid is at times improperly positive," etc., etc., p. 51. A reference to Erb, Onimus, Meyer, Althaus, Bartholow, De Watteville, or numerous other standard writers, would, at least, suggest that our author was familiar with the writings of his co-workers in this branch of study.

There is one good feature in the book, and that is the reports of the cases. Like all cures by electricity, some of these cures are wonderful and unexpected. But in our opinion this fact does not discredit either the observation, the observer, or the means employed. Cures of this nature have always been associated with the use of electricity, and we believe always will be, simply for the reason that such cures are within the possibilities of the agent employed.

The tendency of our times is to find out the *rationale* of these cures and to so eliminate sources of error that the agent in the hands of the trained physician shall exhibit the accuracy of the rifle in the hands of the skilled marksman, rather than the blunderbuss that we have alluded to.

On the whole, then, Dr. Pitzer has ample opportunity to work on his second edition, for there are elements of success in this one before us that will ensure a demand for a second. Our author writes well and writes earnestly ; he evidently has faith in what he writes, and this carries with it conviction. It is for this very reason that we criticise—the work is worth the words.

W. J. M.